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General Assembly
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Official Records

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Friday, 25 April 1997, 1.15 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 1.15 p.m.

Agenda item 21 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions (draft resolution A/51/L.71)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.71.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.71 of 22 April 1997. The following States joined as sponsors after the document was issued: Denmark, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Moldova, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden.

In taking the initiative on this draft resolution, the sponsors were guided by the well-known assessments of the Secretary-General and the Security Council of the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan. This situation remains critical. The country's socio-economic infrastructure has deteriorated significantly and the real income of most families has declined. All this has led to a situation in which broad sectors of the Tajik population are unable today to meet even their own most basic needs. The epidemiological situation has worsened in Tajikistan. One serious problem is the persistence of a large number of refugees and displaced persons. Large-scale measures are necessary to eliminate the danger of mines, which threaten the lives and health of the Tajik population.

The carrying out of such urgent humanitarian tasks is the objective of the draft resolution. The sponsors believe that the inter-Tajik dialogue has recently improved. The agreements signed in December 1996 by the President of Tajikistan and the leaders of the United Tajik Opposition and progress in the negotiations between the Tajik sides have opened the prospects for ending the military and political confrontation and achieving peace and national reconciliation in that country. We consider it important for the international community to support this trend and to demonstrate solidarity with the Tajik people, which has suffered cruelly during the fratricidal war and sorely needs emergency multilateral assistance.

The sponsors of the draft resolution feel that these ideas are adequately reflected in the draft resolution. The preamble expresses support for the efforts of the United Nations aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement in Tajikistan. It welcomes the recent agreements reached between the parties and expresses deep concern at the impact of the conflict on the humanitarian situation and on the social and economic infrastructure of the country. It stresses the importance of

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ensuring the voluntary return, in safety and dignity, of all refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of permanent residence and of reintegrating them into the social and economic life of the country.

It expresses deep concern about the danger posed by landmines in Tajikistan and affirms the urgent need to assist Tajikistan in its efforts to restore basic services and the infrastructure of the country. Finally, it expresses appreciation to the States, United Nations and other organizations that have responded positively to the humanitarian needs of Tajikistan.

In its operative part, the draft resolution encourages the efforts aimed at achieving national reconciliation in Tajikistan and welcomes with appreciation the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to that end. It encourages Member States to respond further both promptly and generously to the consolidated inter-agency donor alert on urgent humanitarian needs launched by the Secretary-General. It requests the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on the progress made in the implementation of this draft resolution.

The draft resolution also condemns terrorist acts and other acts of violence in Tajikistan and calls upon the parties to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and other international humanitarian personnel. It also provides for the General Assembly to consider at its fifty-second session the question of the situation in Tajikistan.

We should like to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the text and particularly to the Permanent Representative of Austria, Mr. Sucharipa, who coordinated the work on the draft resolution. We hope that all delegations will adopt this draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The civil war of 1992 to 1993 and the natural disasters that have stricken Tajikistan over the past four years have greatly damaged the national economy. As a result of the armed conflict, over 40,000 people lost their lives and about 850,000 people were compelled to leave their homes, of whom 200,000 found asylum outside the country. Many communities and civilian structures were destroyed and more than 300,000 people found themselves homeless.

The armed conflict and the natural disasters seriously affected almost all sectors of the economy: health care, education, science and culture. The total damage has been assessed at approximately $7 billion. World Bank experts assess the cost of an emergency programme of restoration to be about $140 million. The capacity of the population of Tajikistan to meet its most basic daily needs has been greatly reduced by a sharp decline in the level of social, health and educational services; a shortage of fuel to heat hospitals, schools and residences; and a decline in the real income of most families.

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan is implementing all possible measures to restore the social and economic infrastructures that were destroyed by the civil war and to transform the distorted, centralized national economy into a modern market economy. The implementation of these important tasks has been hampered by the limited resources available to the Government to enable it to deliver its programmes and by the increased external debt of the country. Tajikistan continues to receive substantial humanitarian support from donor States, the specialized agencies of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. The assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees towards a comprehensive settlement of the problem of Tajik refugees has made it possible for most of them to return home voluntarily and with dignity in a relatively short period of time. Approximately 18,000 residences have been restored through a joint project with the United Nations Development Programme.

Projects are also under way to develop small businesses that could foster the socio-economic conditions to promote the gradual adaptation of returnees. The roles played by the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization are extremely important in preventing disease and improving the health of the women and children of Tajikistan.

We are grateful to Russia and to all other nations and international and non-governmental organizations that have provided assistance in overcoming the recent outbreak of typhoid in Dushanbe, over the course of which about 7,000 people were hospitalized. We greatly appreciate the generous contribution of donor States to easing social tensions in Tajikistan. Stabilization in the socio-economic sphere will not only ensure that the vital social and economic needs of our people are met, but also help to strengthen the process of national harmony and consolidation in society and the genuine restoration of democratic institutions in the country as a whole.

We should like to express our profound gratitude to the 37 sponsors of the draft resolution introduced to the General Assembly at this plenary meeting and hope that it will be unanimously supported by all members of the General Assembly. The people of Tajikistan will be grateful for the adoption of this draft resolution on emergency international assistance which will, without doubt, promote the restoration of peace and civil harmony in the republic and foster the rapid recovery of my country.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Netherlands, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Bijlsma (Netherlands): The European Union shares the deep concern at the worsening humanitarian situation in Tajikistan. The European Union has been among the main contributors of humanitarian assistance in response to appeals. It is with regret, therefore, that we note that efforts to deliver such assistance have been seriously impeded by the continuing civil war and by the security situation, manifested in the hostage-taking of United Nations and other international personnel, and by the use of landmines. We remain particularly concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the use of anti-personnel landmines on the civil population and on the prospects for development.

We support the strong call in the draft resolution to all the parties to do their utmost to cooperate in bringing the civil war to an end, to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel, and to reduce the threat from the use of landmines so that the United Nations and the international community can resume their efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance.

The European Union fully supports the efforts of the United Nations, in particular those of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement in the inter-Tajik talks. We hope that these efforts will continue to further the process of national reconciliation and to improve the plight of the people of Tajikistan, whose living conditions have been badly affected by the prolonged civil war. The re-establishment of security is fundamental to furthering the prospects for economic growth in Tajikistan.

The European Union expresses its concern at the interruption of the peace talks and urges the parties to return to the negotiating table and to restore the momentum to the peace process. We further urge the parties to carry out all the obligations into which they have already entered under agreements previously reached. This process is of critical importance to the stability and sustainable development of both Tajikistan and the Central Asian region as a whole. The text of the draft resolution before the General Assembly is balanced and touches upon all the main areas of concern of the European Union.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.71, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.71?

Draft resolution A/51/L.71 was adopted (resolution 51/30 J).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 21.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.